

Child Fatality Review #08-22
Region 6
Mason County

This 15-year-old Caucasian female died of a drug overdose.

Case Overview

On May 20, 2008, this 15-year-old female was found dead in her home by her mother. Law enforcement arrived on the scene and found the youth on her back on a mattress on the floor. Law enforcement determined she had been dead for some time before they arrived at the home. Law enforcement found a prescription bottle next to her. The medication (Methylin) was prescribed for the youth's mother. Methylin is used for treating attention deficit disorder (ADD) and periods of daytime sleep (narcolepsy). The pills in the bottle were not Methylin according to the mother. A bent Coke can with a burn mark in the center, a broken pipe with burn residue and aluminum foil containing tobacco were located near the youth's body. The coroner was also on the scene and reported nothing seemed suspicious. An autopsy was performed and toxicology tests were conducted.

Referral History

On June 1, 2004, hospital staff reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) intake that on April 9, 2004, the deceased youth, then 11-years-old, was taken to a hospital following a suicide attempt where she swallowed a number of cold/allergy pills. The youth was in therapy but had only two sessions with a therapist. The youth's mother was reported to misuse prescription pills in the past. This referral was screened as information only.

On August 5, 2004, CPS intake was notified by school administrators that the deceased youth missed 48 days of school during the 2003-2004 academic year. The school was unable to file a Becca Bill petition against the mother because she wrote excused absence notes to each of these days. It was also reported that the mother may have a significant alcohol or substance abuse problem, although no details were provided to the department. This referral was screened as information only.

On October 8, 2004, the Department of Corrections contacted CPS intake and reported the mother of the deceased youth abused alcohol and methadone. The mother's paramour was on probation and was not allowed to consume alcoholic beverages. Department of Corrections staff tried to keep their client away from the deceased youth's mother due to her substance abuse issues. This referral was screened as information only.

On February 27, 2007, a relative reported to CPS intake on numerous occasions the deceased youth had attempted suicide. The first attempt was in 2005 and second incident

was in December 2006. The deceased youth attempted suicide by taking prescription drugs. The referrer reported the youth had only marginal attendance at school. The youth was home-schooled, but the relative felt her mother did not meet any of the child's academic needs. The relative also reported the mother lived with her parents while her daughter lived by herself in a garage apartment. This garage apartment was filthy. This referral was screened as information only.

On March 1, 2007, a therapist reported to CPS intake that the deceased youth, then 14-years-old, was not participating in counseling services with her mother. The youth refused to answer questions and claimed she was forced to participate. The youth was physically assaultive toward her mother. The mother admitted to punching her daughter on the face and head. The referrer said the youth used drugs and alcohol and was sneaking boys into her separate apartment. The mother wanted the youth to live in the main house with her but the youth refused. The youth was not cooperating with any home-schooling. The mother was advised about pursuing an At-Risk Youth petition and engaging court intervention. This referral was screened for Family Reconciliation Services (FRS).

On March 6, 2007, a fireman reported to CPS intake his unit responded to a fire in the apartment occupied by the deceased youth. The referrer said the apartment was extremely cluttered with stacks of dirty clothes up to four feet high. The referrer was most concerned about the combustible materials in close proximity to space heaters and that the home smoke detectors were disconnected. The referrer called the interior of the apartment "a fire trap" and the mother was advised to take corrective measures. This referral was screened in for investigation by CPS and closed with an inconclusive finding.

On April 3, 2007, it was reported to CPS intake that the deceased youth's mother was seen acting like she was going to hit the youth with a closed fist. It appeared as though the mother was unable to control her temper. The youth was not hit. The mother also called her daughter names and told her she had to walk home from a mall. This referral was screened as information only.

On November 27, 2007, a relative reported to CPS intake she took the youth in for an eye exam because she said she could not remember the last eye exam she had. The youth needed glasses. The youth reluctantly participated in a drug/alcohol aftercare program but refused to attend Alcoholic's Anonymous (AA) or Narcotic's Anonymous (NA) meetings. The relative stated the youth was being neglected by her mother. The youth was no longer living in a separate apartment and had moved back in with her mother. This referral was screened as information only.

On November 27, 2007, a relative reported to CPS intake the deceased youth returned to her mother's care after living with another relative for several months. The youth was

asked to move from the relative's home due to behavioral problems. The referrer felt that Child Protective Services should re-open the case since the youth returned to her mother's care. This referral was screened as information only.

On February 13, 2008, a relative reported to CPS intake the youth returned to her mother's care in November 2007 and her mother did not enroll her in school. It was also reported the mother had problems with narcotics or prescription drug misuse and did not participate in a recommended treatment program. The referrer added the deceased youth went to inpatient treatment on two occasions but exhibited little change in her behavior. The youth assaulted her mother. The mother was informed of the At-Risk Youth process. This referral was screened as information only.

On May 27, 2008, a Mason County newspaper reported the death of this youth. She was found in her home on the night of May 20, 2008 by her mother. An autopsy was conducted. It was determined this youth died of a drug overdose. This referral was screened as information only.

Issues and Recommendations

Issue: None identified

Recommendation: None